

Doctrine of the Sacraments

Put into a True Light.

GOD forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the World is crucified unto Me, and I unto the World: For in Jesus Christ neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a New Creature: And as many as walk according to This Rule, Peace be on Them, and Mercy, even upon the Israel of GOD.

GAL. VI. 14, 15, 16.



L O N D O N:

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AS there may be some Thoughts entirely New in this Treatise, or at least some Things advanced Not commonly received, I question not but the Spirit of Zeal will be apt to raise Objections; perhaps to argue warmly, and to write learnedly, against it. But give me Leave to sketch out a Rule or two for such an Answer, as I will only regard, let it come from what Hand it will. First, Let it be made in the Spirit of Meekness; and next, Let it be drawn entirely from Reason and Scripture. This is my own Plan, and no Reply can be properly made in any other Method. Learned Rubbish, and Multiplicity of Authorities and Quotations, signify Nothing in the way of Christian Truth: Ten thousand thousand of them are, with Me, not of so much Weight, as one single undistorted Text of Scripture.

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Very respectfully,
J. H. B.

J. H. B.

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T H E
Morality of Religion, &c.



HAVE been led into this Thought, by reflecting on the *Doctrine of the Sacraments*, which has hitherto more than any thing *perplex'd* the Christian World; and truly Mens Opinions about it appear to This day so *opposite* and *contradictory*, that were we to collect the Knowledge of it from the *present* Disputes, I know not whether it would not be more Rational to conclude, There is really no such a Thing as a *Sacrament* in the Christian Religion, than to say What *it is*, or *is not*. And yet (as the Words of the Institution of *both* the Sacraments are as plain as any in the Gospel, and the Things themselves were design'd for the *Use*, and consequently for the *Understanding* of All, as well the most Illiterate as Literate, Christians) no doubt they are in Themselves, when disrobed of, and dis-embarrassed from, the *artful* and *designing* Comments of Learning and Debate, as Intelligible as the *plainest* Truth contained in the Gospel.

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Most Men, in Controversies of Religion, write to serve an *Hypothesis*, and not for the sake of *Truth*; and the Method they take for this, is, to pursue the Sense of Scripture, not properly in the Word of God where *it is*, but in the Writings of Men where *it is not*: And they are generally so attached to *Authority*, and so wedded to Following in a *Track*, that they willingly persuade themselves, what Their Authors teach and maintain *must be right*, because They have said it; even tho' the plain Words of Scripture and the Voice of Reason are directly against them, in their most *easy* and *obvious* Sense.

The Scriptures I own are not the *Fountain* of Truth, but they are a *Declaration* of That Truth, which it has pleas'd God to make Necessary to be known, for all that have a *Capacity* and *Opportunity* of knowing it; as it has a Natural Tendency to *promote* their Salvation, or to *help them forward* in the Great Work of it: And no other Writing *can be* a Declaration of it *but They*, as no other Writing is *so attested* to come from God *as They*. Hitherto then we are to have Recourse in all our Debates of Religion, as to the Only *infallible Guide* to which our Thoughts and Reasonings must *absolutely* submit; not in finding out *Natural Truth*, for That is written on the Tables of our Hearts, but *Revealed Truth*; which is only what is *highly Useful* as a Medium, for the *better Practice* of that Truth which is Natural. For Natural Truth as it exists in the Light of our Own Minds, *irradiated*

dictated from that great Source of Light and Reason the *Moral Attributes* of God, considered together with our Own *Rational Nature*, and also with Our *Dependence* on him, is, when carefully and duly attended to, *superior* to Revealed; as it is that *constant* and *immutable* Rule to Every Man, by which he judges of the Doctrines of Scripture, whether they come from God, and in what Sense they contain the Revelations of *His Will*.

From this it is a Consequence, That *Moral Truth* is the Only True Religion of the *Object*: And as we find Ourselves moral Agents, the *Practice of Moral Truth* is True Religion in the *Subject*: And therefore, Nothing can be *Revealed Truth*, but in such a sense as it best serves the Ends and Purposes of *Morality*. Reveal'd Religion is not in its own Nature *Moral*, but purely *Positive*; yet, if It had not in itself a *Moral Tendency*, it could not, in any degree, have been enjoin'd us by an *All-perfect Moral Being*, because it would have contradicted his Own *Moral Properties*: And therefore, 'tis only *so far True*, as it has *This Tendency*; and any Doctrine so taught, or so interpreted, as to destroy *this Tendency*, is *so far* No Doctrine of Scripture, but a mere Human self-will'd Interpretation, *mistaken* by the Explainer, and *False* in fact.

Having laid this down as a *Postulatum*, which no Rational Thinker can deny me; I propose in my Enquiry into the *Doctrine of the Sacraments*, (which I shall not come directly to at present) to follow no Guide but *Reason* and

and *Scripture*. And for this cause I give up All Authority as *useless* to the End proposed, and determine to *divest* myself of All Prejudice and Prepossession as much as possible; setting myself to think in the most *Rational Way* I can, and resolving to deduce Truth from its *natural* and *genuine* Fountain, that is, from God, that Mighty All-powerful Being, who is the sole Cause and Author of all Things; for God is Truth, as he is the Only *necessarily* Existing Being, and in whose Mind *all Ideas* of all Things are, and of all the Relations and Proportions of those Things one to another. Thus all Truths are as *necessary* and *eternal* and *immutable*, as the *Ideas* of Things themselves; and tho' in our Reasonings upon any Subject the Way is to demonstrate one Truth by another, yet the Truth so demonstrated is no less *necessarily* and *eternally* true, than that which demonstrates; for a Thing is not True because we have *proved it so*, but it was always equally True, or else it could not have been *proved so* at all.

That GOD Is, is the first Truth in Reason; tho' we should reason from the Effects to the Cause, to find This out: That He is a *Moral Agent*, is first in Religion; because if He did not always prefer, and chuse, and do what is Right and Fit, there is no Reason why We should do it, nor could we be call'd to account for not doing it. What I mean by *Agency* is, that God has a Natural Power to *chuse* either Good or Evil; and he cannot but *chuse* either the one or t'other, and act accordingly. *Agency* then

then implies *Choice* and *Will*, and a *Freedom* of doing or not doing what is *right* and *fit*. Such, I say, is the Agency of God. He acts *freely*, and always chooses what is *best*, or at least what is in its Nature *Good*, and *Proper*, and *Sufficient*, for all his Purposes; for there is a *natural* Difference in things, or else He, no more than We, could be said to choose *right* or *wrong*. Thus He acts, and *cannot but* do so, from the Excellency of his Nature; and yet *Necessity* is no more the Cause of his Moral Agency, than it is of his Existence, which it cannot be; but only the Reason of it: Because, supposing Him the *First Cause*, he can have no Cause *prior* to himself. But He is a pure *Moral Being*, or always chooses and does what is *right* and *fit* and *most proper* to be done, on all Occasions, and at all Times, from the Perfection of his *Will* only; which is Untainted with Evil, and is above any Temptation to act, or to approve, it.

God then being an *absolutely Moral Being*, or *perfectly* and *infinitely* Wise, Good, Just, and Holy, by Reason and Choice, cannot (as I said) approve any thing *contrary* thereunto; and He must consequently require All his Rational Creatures to choose and act *in like manner*, according to the Strength of the Nature and Faculties which he has given them. From Creatures that are in a *perfect State*, He absolutely requires *Perfection*: But he cannot require a *Sinful Creature* to be *absolutely Sinless*, or an *Imperfect Creature* to be *absolutely Perfect*, for This their respective Natures will not admit of:

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But he requires them to *strive to approach* as near to Innocence and Perfection, as they possibly can, consider'd in the *State and Circumstances* in which his Providence has placed them. And to Creatures acting in *this manner*, He cannot but have annex'd or prepared *Rewards* in the original Constitution of things, proportionable to the Progress *each one makes* towards Perfection, that is, towards *Happiness*: For He himself is no otherwise Happy, than as He is *Perfect*. Happiness in Us, is hardly any thing more than so much *Freedom* from Pain and Misery; but God has no Degree of Pain or Misery, nor ever had, and therefore is not happy as *We are now*: But He is *absolutely Perfect*; and is therefore far above *the Sense* of Pleasure or Pain, even infinitely so: Which is an Happiness we can have *no Idea* of at present, and perhaps never shall have. But this is certain, The more *perfect* we are now, the more *Happy* also; and the more we shall be so, naturally and unavoidably, *as we press forward towards the Mark*, viz. The State of Perfection of a Creature of Our Class.

Thus God has designed in the natural Constitution of our Moral Being, that Virtue *shall bring* Happiness, and Vice Misery; and let Men live under what *Natural Light* soever, that is, in whatsoever Degree of it, or under what other *Gracious Dispensation* vouchsafed unto them, This always was, and could not but be, the Method of God's Proceeding with them,

them, with respect to *Reward and Punishment*. He never could, nor can, make the Good Man in the way of *Retribution* Miserable, nor the Bad Man Happy; because this is to *alter* the Natures of things, which are *Eternal and Immutable*. Men were always design'd to be Happy in the other World, in *proportion* to their Virtue in this; and Miserable as their Vices were more or less, taking in the *Means and Motives* of each, with respect to their Actings here. And this being a *settled Rule* in the Reasons and Proportions which Things naturally bear one to another, it may be justly called, *The First Covenant* of God with Mankind; from which nothing can sway him, so as to make him act towards his Rational Creatures in a contrary manner: Nor can He himself give any *Positive Law*, or any *Revealed Dispensation* of Grace, that shall make *any Change* in this Fundamental Law of Nature. But upon all Accounts as He is Wise and Just and Good and Holy, he *acts*, and *even will act*, towards All men, their Variety of Circumstances consider'd, with the same *equal and impartial* hand, *rendering to every Man according to his Works*, whether he be *Christian, Jew, or Gentile*.

But if Dispensations of *Grace* make no Alteration in this Fundamental Law of Nature, to what End and Purpose were such Dispensations given? And where was the *Advantage* of their being given, if the Men to whom they were given, were still left upon the *same Foot* of Moral Practice with the rest of Mankind; and

All *equally* obliged in the same manner to *work out their own Salvation*, by being Good and doing Righteousness? I answer: Whatever the *Advantage* was, (which I shall touch upon hereafter) 'tis certain, God was *no Respector of Persons*, by revealing his Will in any Particular to particular Men or Nations: For, that he has expressly *declared against*. He did not do it, to shew any *partial* Love, Value or Esteem he had for This Nation more than That; or, that He would *arbitrarily*, and for *mere Will*, save This man's Soul, and reject the other: For with Him, *neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature*. If Men be Morally Good, let them be in what Light they will, whether in the faint Glimmerings of *Mere Nature*, or in the open Sunshine of *Revealed Truth*: If they do, but their Duties, I say, *as well as they can*, and have a *due Regard* to the Morality of their Actions to the best of their Understanding, in the Station in which they are placed by God, He *equally accepts them*, without any *personal* Distinction; and they will receive from Him in the Nature and Reason of things, *a due proportion* of Reward as their Deservings be, or be made happy so far as with Sincerity and Diligence they have endeavour'd to make themselves Perfect.

The *Necessity* of Revelation to the Salvation of Men, is not perhaps *so great* as some may think it; how *Expedient* soever it may be, for *encouraging* Us in our Moral Duties, and consequently, for carrying us on to *an higher Degree* of Virtue. Supposing it *absolutely Necessary* for

for this End: Consider what a Reproach this would be, to the *Justice* and *Goodness* of God. How *Partial* would it represent him, in not allowing *Necessary things* for the *Real Happiness* of his Creatures? For 'tis certain, He has never vouchsafed it but to a small Parcel of Men, in comparison of the Bulk of Mankind. And what! Shall the *Greatest part* of the World be doomed to Eternal Misery, for an Unavoidable Want of having what was *really Necessary* for procuring their Happiness? God forbid! Who can reconcile this with the *infinite Perfections* of the Divine Being? The Revelation of the *Jewish Law* was in a manner conceal'd from the World, at least for a long time, in a dark Corner of it: And tho' *the Sound* of the Gospel may have *gone out to the uttermost parts of the Earth*, it has been in a great measure nothing but a *Sound*: Talk'd of indeed by Many, but *truly* inculcated but by a Few. I believe, No man that thinks will say, this has been a *sufficient* Promulgation of the Will of God to All men, unless it had come to All in particular, or to Every man in its full Light; that is, supposing His Revealed Will (as was said at first) to be *absolutely Necessary* to Salvation; that All should know it; *so absolutely Necessary*, I mean, that Men cannot be saved as certainly *without it*, as they may *with it*. For 'tis no more Just in God to necessitate *any One Man* to final Misery and Undoing, than it is to damn *the whole World* at once. It must therefore be concluded, That Revelation does not in the least *alter* the Case with respect to God's Dealing with Men

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as to *Reward* or *Punishment*; any farther than it is to be accounted for by them, (as *all the Gifts of God* are) as they make a Good or Bad Use of it.

That All men, of All Nations under Heaven, shall be rewarded or punish'd *according to their Works*, their different States and Circumstances consider'd, is an *Eternal and Immutable Truth*, discoverable by the Light of Reason. Now the Knowledge of *This Truth* is what Every Man had a Right to be let into; as it is *absolutely Necessary* in order to his Happiness to know, whether he be *accountable* or not for the Conduct of all his Actions, to the *Supreme Being* that created him; and it would have been cruelly Unjust in God to have *concealed it* from us, or so to have framed our Nature, as not to have left us, in the very Constitution of it, *sufficient Means* to make a Discovery; so suited to *promote* our Truest and Most lasting Good: But whether God would vouchsafe us more than this, or ever restore us to the *perfect and immortal* Happiness, for which we were in our Creation no doubt *design'd*, because in all our Powers made *capable* of it; or on what Consideration, or by what Means, He would bestow it upon us; as we had *no Right* to know, nor *any Pretence* of Claim to so great a Blessing, so the Revelation of it was a pure Act of *Favor*, as well as that of every Step He took to effect the Great Design.

In like manner, All men have *sufficient* Strength, no doubt, granted them by the Good and Great Creator, in their *mere natural* Powers
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and Faculties, for carrying them forward to *such a degree* of Perfection in Virtue and Goodness, as shall make them capable and deserving of an *adequate* and *proportionable* Degree of Happiness; and that is All that the *best of Men* have a Natural Right to claim, that is, an Happiness *bearing proportion* to their Merit, or to their sincere Endeavours after *Moral Perfection*. But that God should afford them any *Supernatural Helps* or *Means* to facilitate their Duty, any *Extraordinary Views* or *Encouragements* to that End, more than mere Natural Reason furnishes, is purely an Act of *Divine Favor*; which Favor, or Faculty of shewing Kindness and Mercy, God has in his own *arbitrary* Disposal, and may for wise Reasons of his own, too deep for Us to fathom thoroughly, dispense it to *this* or *that* Man; to *this* or *that* People, or to *any Nation* upon Earth, without any Derogation from his most perfect *Wisdom* and *Justice*. Just as We ourselves, who like Him are *Moral Agents*, have it in our power to do Acts of *Bounty* and *Benevolence*, for Reasons of our own, to whom we please; so it be not, to *encourage* Vice, or as a *Recompense* to Sin: For as Sin naturally deserves Punishment and Discountenance, and is already prejudged to it by the Wise and Good Governour of the World; for Us to *encourage* or *reward* It, would be highly *Immoral*, as 'tis a Going against the Reason and Nature of things so to do. But to do Good with a Moral View before us, that is, for the sake of doing *real* Good; or in such a manner

as it may have a *Moral Tendency*, that is, *animate, enable, or support* others in a Course of Well-doing; is acting like God himself, with *Favor* indeed, but without *Partiality*. In this Sense 'tis written, *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*; that is, shewn less Favor to: Again, *I will be Their GOD, and They shall be My People*; distinguish'd from others by my Undeserved Bounty: And again, *I will call Them my People which were Not my People, and Her beloved which was Not beloved*.

Upon the Fall of Man God could certainly have *restored him* to the Perfection of his original Nature, and in the End to an Immortality of complete Happiness, to the *Joys of Heaven and Pleasures for evermore*; and this too, by the *very Means* he then proposed, and now does it, tho' he had *never revealed* his Design, or that Means to him. Therefore, that He revealed it, was not by any Reason of *Necessity*, either on God's part or Man's; as if the one could not be so Just, nor the other so Good, as he *ought to be*, without it: For Man had still Powers remaining to do *his Best*, in the State of Pravity and Weakness he had brought himself to; and God could then require no more from him, nor did the Nature of Things require it, than *to labour all he could* for Newness of Life, and to come again as near his Primitive Perfection as possible; that he might at last receive a *Retribution of Happiness*, in a degree proportioned to *his Works*. But God gave him this Revelation in *pure Pity and Compassion* to him, as an ex-
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traordinary *signal Benefit*, to *raise up* his sinking Spirits, to *enliven* his Hope, and to *animate* his Endeavours; and consequently, as a *Means of Grace*; that laying hold of it by *Faith*, he might with the greater Comfort look up unto God, and pray to him with stronger Assurance of Aid and Acceptance, *for his Mercies sake*. This Knowledge then was not of *such Necessity* in the Nature of things, that Man could not perform every thing his then present State *demanded*, nor be *accepted* of God if he truly did All that lay in him, supposing this Knowledge had not been *graciously* imparted to him; but it was imparted to him by way of *Help* and *Assistance* of his Moral Virtue, or to make his Duty more *Agreeable* and *Pleasant* by the Encouragement of a Promise of far greater Good, The *Eternal Salvation* of his Soul, than he could naturally expect: For the Law of Nature, fulfilled as much *as possible* by a Sin-polluted imperfect Creature, can only render Him *less Miserable*, or in a low degree Happy, but *not perfectly so*.

It was the same, in his Transactions with the *Father of the Faithful*. It was not *Necessary* in the Reason of things, that *Abraham*, any more than a great Part of the World now, should know, That God would raise up of *His Seed* a Blessing for the Whole World; or, no more than it was to know in what Sense God meant *That Blessing*, which 'tis plain He did not know, nor do the Words of *that* part of Scripture express it: For God could *equally*

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have blessed Him, and All Mankind in him, and in the same Method; tho' he had *not made it known*, he would do it. Nor was it on account of God's particular Covenant then made with *Abraham*, that He or His Descendants were *accepted* with him; for the Divine Acceptance is founded on the Reasons and Natures of things only, as we more *perfectly* or *imperfectly* copy out the Perfections of God, that is, on our *greater* Degrees of Moral Rectitude; or rather, as we are now become Depraved and Sinful, I would say, 'Tis our *nearer Approaches* to that Perfection of Nature we have lost, that shall distinguish us *personally* in His Sight. And so it was with Him we are speaking of. The Lord said to him, *I am the Almighty GOD: Walk before me, and be Thou perfect*, or, as *sincerely* so as possible; and I will make of thee a Great Nation, and All the Nations of the Earth shall be blessed in Thee. This Promise then made to *Abraham* was a mere Favor, plainly designed, especially, for an *Encouragement* to him in the way of Moral Goodness; for it was only to be a Blessing to Him, and to All that believed with him, as He and They *walked* before GOD in Truth and Righteousness. So he again repeats it: *For I know him, that he will command his Children and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment; that He may bring upon Abraham, That which he hath spoken.*

Where let it be observ'd, That there is a Great Distinction to be made, between the
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Divine *Favor*, and the Divine *Acceptance*; for they are in themselves very different, tho' often mistaken for one and the same thing; and cannot therefore but, when confounded, create great Inconsistency in *Theological Debates*. The Divine *Favor* (as I have before argued) is a gracious *Act* of God, flowing from his mere Pleasure and Good-will, tho' always with a *Moral View* (for without That, God, as he is perfectly Moral, can shew no *Favor*) to the Person or People on whom it is bestow'd; as when 'tis said, *I will have Mercy on whom I will have Mercy, and Compassion on whom I will have Compassion*: But the Divine *Acceptance* is governed by Reason and the Nature of things, and flows from his all-seeing Wisdom and perfect Justice; as when 'tis said in another place, *GOD is no Respector of Persons, but in every Nation pious and good Men are accepted with him*. It was in the first sense, that God pitch'd upon *Abraham* out of all the World, on whom to bestow his Promises, when (had he pleas'd) he might have done as much for any other Man upon Earth; and thus 'tis verified, that *it is not of Him that willeth, nor of Him that runneth, but of GOD who sheweth Mercy*: But it is in the other, that God has accepted him to Salvation, as our Lord sufficiently implies by calling *Abraham's Bosom* the Seat of Happiness for departed Souls; for in the other world None are happy, none can be so, but such as have in this labour'd with Sincerity to be Good and Virtuous.

The Consequence then is this: That the Covenant made with *Abraham* was not, that He and His people should be *more Blessed*, or *rather Accepted*, by Him, than any other person or people; for, the Blessing equally extended to all the Men and Nations upon Earth: Nor merely, that they should be Blessed in, and thro' the Seed that should come: But that they should be Blessed in Him, if they continued to walk before God uprightly, that is, in Moral Obedience, and were *as perfect*, or endeavour'd *sincerely* to be so, as their Nature would admit of. The Covenant therefore was nothing *New*, nothing *Peculiar*, as to Their part, respecting Morality; as if, by any extraordinary Benefits or Privileges conferred upon them by that particular Covenant, the Weight of their Moral Obligations was in any degree *lessen'd*, or farther *removed* from Them than from Others; for that would have shewn God *partial*, and have inferred a *Change* in the Eternal Reasons and Relations of things, which are *Unalterable*: But it was the same without any Addition or Diminution, which was made *with all Men* from the foundation of the World, and in the View of God, from Eternity; *viz.* That the Good should be *naturally* and *unavoidably* Happy, and the Wicked Miserable. Nor was it any thing *properly New* on God's part, but was the same in this respect which he had made before with *Adam*; only Now he added more *circumstantially*, what he had promised before but *in general*, That from *Abraham's* Loins particularly the Promised Seed should come.

Circumcision

Circumcision therefore, which is esteemed to have been one of the *Jewish* Sacraments, did not confer any New Privileges on the Receivers of it, as an Entrance into any Covenant with God on more advantageous Terms, than they were in before by the Law of Nature; for That, as I said, is *Immutable*; and no Positive Institution or Revealed Religion can be given, that shall *infringe* the Rights of it, or any way *weaken* the Obligation it lays upon Mankind. But the Additional part was this: God made *Abraham* a Promise, (which He calls his *Own* Covenant, not *Abraham's*) that in *His Seed* all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed; and his Posterity particularly, with very signal *Temporal Blessings*. This Promise therefore they were in Reason obliged to believe, as far as they were convinced of its Divine Authority; and they receiv'd the Rite of Circumcision as an outward Sign or Token of it, and that they did (by the Use thereof) believe it; *St. Paul* says, as a Seal of the Righteousness of Faith: For which cause, whosoever of them rejected This Rite, did the same thing as declare they had no Faith in this Promise; and were therefore said to break God's Covenant, and to be cut off from his People: Not from His future Acceptance, or from a proportionable degree of Happiness in the other World, if they lived righteously notwithstanding; for whosoever fears God and works Righteousness (how much soever they may differ, as the *Jews* and *Gentiles* did, about Revelation and other External Points) is accepted with him: But the Meaning is, They ceas'd to be

be of the Number of those whom God had so highly *favour'd*, by This Promise; and therefore *lost* the great Advantage of it, as it was design'd for an *Help*, or extraordinary *Means* of Assistance and Support to them, in carrying them on the better towards *Moral Perfection*. Thus *Abraham* believing God, it was counted to him for *Righteousness*: Either as a *just and right* Thing in Him, to believe the Promise of God thus reveal'd; or, as That *Faith* was a Means to him of being *more righteous*, more Good, holy and religious, than otherwise probably he would have been. For the *Apostle*, who mentions this, does not mean, that Men are *justified*, or *accepted* by God as *righteous*, purely for their *Faith*, or by the mere Act of believing; for then *Good Works* would not be Necessary, which is contrary not only to the *Reason* of things, but to the whole *Gospel Doctrine*: But that when their Faith hath its proper Effect, and works them up to *Righteousness* in a more eminent degree than if they had it not, then are they *blessed with faithful Abraham*. For 'tis the *Just* only, Pious, righteous and good Men, that shall live by *Faith*, or be made immortally Happy on that account in the World to come.

To like purpose was the other Rite, The *Lord's Passover*, appointed, which is also reckoned a *Jewish Sacrament*; as indeed it was, in the Sense of Sacraments being *outward Means* of Grace, in their Nature fitted, and designed by God, to stir men up *more sensibly* to a constant, and (if possible) to a more exalted, Virtue. For
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though it is called a *Sacrifice*, from the Slaying of the Lamb in Honor of God, yet it was no Sacrifice for Sin, as some may take it; but a pure *Thanksgiving Feast*, which was to be wholly eaten by the *Assembly of the Congregation*, as a solemn *Act of Rejoicing* for their Deliverance from a very tyrannical and oppressive Enemy. That God would deal thus graciously with them, He declared beforehand, and tells them, the Blood of the Lamb should be a *Token* or external *Sign* to them, that they should escape in the general Destruction of the First-born of *Egypt*: And it was Their part to believe this, and, as an Instance of that Belief, to strike the Blood on the Door-posts of their Houses. But could not God shew them *this Favor*, and make This a *Token* of it, without accepting the Lamb as a *real Sacrifice* for Sin? As it was a mere *Act of Favor*, 'tis certain, there could be no Equivalent in it by way of *Satisfaction to Justice*, nor so much as any *Type* or *Shadow* of an Atonement in it, for the Sins of the people. Besides, the *Israelites*, at that time, were a pack of Sinful Idolaters, wholly *Unworthy* of Pardon, or Forgiveness; and therefore there was, undoubtedly, no *Remission of Sins*, or any other-like Benefit, conferred in the Case: But the whole of it was, It was an *Assurance* to Them, of God's working the promised Deliverance, supposing they Now duly express'd their Faith in it; and it was appointed only as a *Memorial*, by a *Feast unto the Lord*, thro'out their Generations; or, a Perpetual Ordinance for continuing the *Memory* of this Extraordinary Deliverance,

Deliverance, and for impressing it the deeper into their Minds; in order to bind them the more firmly to *Faith* in the True God, and by a sense of Gratitude to a stronger *Love* of him, and a more faithful *Obedience* to all his Precepts.

It is to be consider'd, That every thing in a Religious View, besides the Law of Nature, is a *Favor* of God to Mankind in general, or to some Men in particular: That the Law of Nature stands upon *Eternal Foundations*, which nothing can shake, weaken, or disannul; but it continues, and ever will do so, *unalterably* binding, and *indispensably* Necessary to be perform'd, by every Man living, to the utmost of his Power: That therefore the Sacraments just mention'd, or any thing else of like Nature, could make no Alteration in any Man's *Moral Duty*, any farther than as they were *Helps* and *Means* (if he pleas'd to give them their full Force and Efficacy) to perform it better. The *Israelites* then were, after all, left upon the *same foot* of Equitable Dealing with the rest of Mankind, who had not these Favors bestowed upon them; that is, to be rewarded with future Happiness in a State of Retribution, in proportion to their greater Advances in Moral Virtue, consider'd with the stronger Reasons of Means and Motives which they had vouchsafed unto them; and were therefore liable to the greater Condemnation and severer Punishment, if they neglected or misapplied them.

If their *other* Sacrifices should be here produced as a contrary Instance, by which some particular

particular and uncommon Benefits were conferr'd; I shall not scruple to affirm, that they took away *No Sins*, in the sense of having them at all forgiven by God on *their Account*; nor could do it, consistently with the *Divine Attributes*: Whatever some Men may have thought, or written, upon this Topic. This must either be acknowledg'd *as True*, or the Law of *Moses* not acknowledg'd for a *Divine Institution*. For, as 'twas said at first, An all-perfect *Moral Being*, as we *believe*, and *confess*, and can even *demonstrate*, God to be, cannot give any *Positive Law* or Injunction whatsoever in Religion, but what has a *Moral Tendency*; and, in what sense soever any such Law *wants* this Tendency, in that sense it *neither is, nor can be*, any Institution that comes from God. Now supposing the Legal Sacrifices to have obtain'd Pardon of Sin *from GOD*, for those that offer'd them, they were so far *from having* a Moral Tendency in that View, or from being any way helpful or suited to forward Men in the Steps of Moral Rectitude; that they *were*, and *could not but be*, the greatest Encouragement that could be given to *Vice and Immorality*: And therefore it must be said, in That sense, the Law was *not given* by God, nor could he ever *design it* for such a Purpose.

That the Notion of the Legal Sacrifices being *truly propitiatory* of Sins, is an Encouragement to *Vice*, or at least at that time, when they were in Use, would have been so; and consequently, a manifest Derogation from,

or rather a Contradiction of, the Divine *Moral Properties*; needs, I think, no great Art in the plain Method of Reasoning to demonstrate. For in the first place, supposing the Truth of that Doctrine, That they did *really expiate Sin* to spiritual Ends and Purposes, so as to exempt a Man, I mean, from the *future and eternal* Punishment of it, 'tis certain the People were in no wise obliged to be *constantly and habitually* Good, nor so much as to *endeavour* after it, (contrary to the Nature of Moral Goodness in Men, which incontrovertibly consists in a *constant Habit* of Virtue;) because it was then *Needless*, and utterly *Unserviceable* to the Business of Religion, or the Acceptance of God: For they were sure upon every Trespas to be *pardon'd and forgiven*, and to have the Score of past Sins *struck out*, tho' they had really no *inward* Purity, any more than a few days or hours *hypocritical* Preparation, merely thro' the *Offering* of a Carnal Sacrifice.

And again, Who would not have gladly enjoy'd their Sins, at the Expense of a *Bullock*, or a *Goat*, had that been the Case? Who would not have chosen to have *indulged* their Lusts at pleasure, considering our *innate Propensity* to such Indulgence, tho' ever so contrary to *Natural Reason*, and the Obligations of *Moral Duty*; when they had always, or at any time, in their own hands, an Atonement ready to set the Matter to rights with Almighty God? Nay, Who could possibly have incurr'd his Displeasure in *this* World, or fail'd of being accepted of him in the *other*, but who were not

not able, by their unhappy Circumstances, to procure a Sacrifice proper for the Expiation of Sin? Thus, had Sin been *at all atoned for* in a Religious Sense by the *Mosaic Law*, Vice must have been thereby, not only *tolerated*, but *encouraged* to the last degree; and that most effectually to the *Ruin* of Virtue, because supported by the *Authority* of Religion; the Presence of which often makes people do things, which otherwise they would not, as not daring to go against the Light of their own Minds *without it*.

And not only this: But God by *such a Dispensation* would have render'd himself, contrary to his known most Sacred and Unchangeable Properties, *Impure* and *Unholy*, a Patron of *Immorality* and a Friend of *Sin*, in establishing *Iniquity* by a Law, and making it *Easy* to the Conscience by the Speciousness of a *Sin-offering*; as well as *Partial* and *Unjust*, in putting some Men under so hard a Fate, as not to be in a Capacity of sinning like others with *Toleration* and *Impunity*, supposing they fail'd of a *proper* Sacrifice, or happen'd to have so *little Sense* of Religion as not to offer it. Which are such *glaring Absurdities*, and consequently the Premises from which they flow so *very false*, that I cannot but introduce the Censure which the Prophet *Micah* has passed upon them; by arguing, That if a Man was to give a *Thousand Rams*, or *Ten thousand Rivers of Oil*, nay, his *First-born* for his *Transgression*, and all the *Fruit of his Body* for the *Sin of his Soul*, it could have no such Effect

as to work *his Pardon* with God; whose Acceptance, he declares, can only be obtain'd by the *sincere Practice* of Moral Virtue, that is, by *doing justly, loving Mercy, and walking humbly*, with that Infinitely-perfect and All-glorious Being.

If it should be farther said, That the *Jewish* Sacrifices, and particularly the *Paschal Lamb*, were an Atonement in view of the *Great Atonement* of all; let that be proved from *express* Words of Scripture, and not from the *fanciful* Deductions of Men. If they were so; undoubtedly *That* people so understood them, or they could neither offer them up as *they ought*, nor expect to reap that Benefit by them which was *intended*. But 'tis certain, they never thought so: For they had no Notion of *The Christ*, the Great Prophet that should come, dying *for the Sins of Men*: They generally look'd upon him, as one that should be a *Temporal Prince*, of great Power and Authority, and who should by his Prowess be able to *restore* their declining State to the highest Degree of Grandeur. This, at least, was the Opinion of the later *Jews*: And the more Ancient ones (before the Knowledge of the True End and Design of their Sacrifices was *utterly effaced*, by ill-grounded and imaginary Expectations) represent *that part* of Religion, as in no sort intended for *gaining* the Divine Acceptance; as they certainly would not have done, had they *believed*, or even *supposed*, them to have been a *Religious Atonement* for Sin. On the other hand, they set them aside, in all their
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their Controversies about them, as *entirely Useless* for That End, and make all Hopes of Pardon to depend on the *Morality* of their Actions, and the *Purity* of their Lives and Manners. On This foot, *Tho' your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow; tho' they be red as Crimson, they shall be as Wool.*

'Tis not at all strange, that they should by degrees come to imagine *greater Effects* and *more lasting Benefits* from their Sacrifices, than they were either *capable of* in themselves, or were *design'd for* by the Institutor of them. How many *Additions* do we every day see made to Christian Truth, and *Misrepresentations* of Scripture given out, to *support Mens Errors*, or to *excuse their Vices*? Human Nature is prone to Ease and Indulgence, glad of any Pretence to shift off the *Difficulty of Virtue*, and fond of the least Color of Excuse for persisting in the *Ways of its own Heart*, and in the *Sight of its own Eyes*; and is, consequently, naturally bent for throwing as much as possible upon *External Performances* in Religion, which are trite and easy, in comparison of that *Moral Rectitude*, which the Reason of things requires Every man to labour after. This *fatal Error* had not only spread itself thro' the Exterior World by a general Corruption, but it soon took Possession of *Jewish hearts*, (as too easily it does of Many of Ours *at this day*) and finding their Sacrifices were Expiations in a *political Sense*, they soon corrupted and changed their Notion of them to a *religious one*; and because they *sanctified to the Purifying of the Flesh*, it was
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a ready Transition to think, they did it to the Purifying of the Conscience also. This was the Mistake, that the Inspired Writers above cited set themselves to correct, and if possible to reform; but herein they met with little Success. The Error was *pleasing*, and having once got into the Hearts of depraved Men, it went on and prevailed to the Times of the *Apostles*; and we find it strenuously combated by St. Paul in his Epistle to the *Galatians*, wherein he calls the Legal Rituals *Rudiments of this World*, intended only for a Temporal purpose; and as to taking away Sins, he stiles them *Weak and beggarly Elements*, without Power, without Efficacy.

In another place, this *Divine Interpreter* of the Mind of God in the Legal Institutions, speaks more expressly and undeniably of the utter *Insufficiency* of Sacrifice in particular, for the End proposed; where he says, That *those Sacrifices which They offer'd year by year, continually, could not make the Comers thereunto Perfect*; for, *the Blood of Bulls and of Goats cannot take away Sins*: Sins in general, that is, *no Sins* at all. In short, they had no *natural Efficacy*, in any View, or on any Consideration whatsoever, for the *perfecting* of the Nature of Man in Moral Goodness, which is the Duty of a rational Creature, as far as lies in him, and on which Account only, I have before shewn, God can accept and reward us; nor for *expiating* of Sin, so as to justify, or present him righteous, before an infinitely Holy and Just God, in order to procure from him *an entire Pardon* and

and Peace. For which the *Apostle* gives Two, I think, very convincing and unanswerable Reasons.

One is, That *they would then have ceased to be offer'd*: The other, That *the Worshipers would then have had no more Conscience of Sins*. But This they had; and therefore, they were *never intended* for Expiation. The Argument is this: Sins *once expiated*, and of course Pardon *obtain'd* from God, let it be by what Means soever, by Sacrifice or even any other ritual Form, makes the Worshipper *pure and perfect* for ever after, and as upright and as free from all Pollution, as *Adam* was when he came first out of the hand of God; and consequently, as he can have no more *Guilt* of Sin, he needs no Repetition of *Sacrifice* or *Oblation* for it. On which 'tis farther observable, That according to *this* Solution of St. Paul (whom I take to have been the Greatest Doctor of the Christian Church, next Our Lord himself) when God has *once* forgiven Sins, even tho' it should be by the Means of a mere *External Rite*, (could that be rationally supposed) he has done it *finally* and *for ever*; and therefore, as long as we have *any Conscience of Sins* remaining in our Breasts, occasioned by any after Slips or Failings in any Part of Duty, 'tis plain, God never did forgive us; whatever *Outward Means* we had made Use of for that End, or however *Enthusiastically* we might persuade ourselves we had obtain'd it.

Men that have entertain'd the Notion of Sin being expiated and remitted by *positive Rites*
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and Ceremonies, (which is certainly the Greatest and most Pernicious Corruption of Truth, that ever enter'd the Church of God) seem not to have consider'd the Nature and Design of the *Mosaic Institutions*. The first Law given to the *Israelites* was That of the *Ten Commandments*, which was no other than an Epitome, or General Heads, of that *Moral Rectitude*, which the Nature and Constitution of things requires Man to practise. This shews, what God especially insisted on, as the *main End* and *Purport* of our Being, even our pursuing His Glory and our Own Happiness, not by any *Positive* but *Moral Duty*; not by Forms only and *outward Ceremonies*, but by a Life of true *internal Piety* and *Virtue*. Wherefore all the Rites and Observances super-added afterwards, could be *no Exemptions* from This in any Sense, or in any Degree, but must be designed and established, as far as they had a *Religious View*, as Means or Motives to this End. God did not, he could not, alter the Nature of True Religion, and make That which consisted before *immutably* in the *Imitation* of his Own Divine Moral Attributes, and consequently in the *Renewal* of our corrupt Minds and Dispositions, consist at all in such *External* things as he afterwards abolish'd for the *Weakness* and *Unprofitableness* of them, towards making us *perfect* or obtaining an *eternal Life* for us. And if they were *Means* only of Religion, and not *Religion itself*, God never did, nor ever will, nay, nor ever can, accept Men for *Their* sakes, but only for the sake of
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of *That* of which they are the *Means*, and that but in a degree as they make men better, that is, *more pious and more good*, than they would have been *without them*.

To know the *true End* of these Sacrifices, (which is a Point not generally thought on) I question not, it will be allowed me, That the Law of *Moses* was a Mixt Institution, and not only *Religious*, but also *Civil*, in its first Design and Appointment; as well intended for the *Good* of Government, as for the *Honor* of God. And perhaps, if you consider it, a better Way could not be found out for maintaining the *Dignity* of the Government, that is, for the *Suppression* of Vice, and consequently for the *Felicity* and *Peace* of the Public, than loading the Practice of Sin with such heavy Fines and Forfeitures, as the *Jewish* Sacrifices may be justly call'd. Heavy they were: For *St. Peter* speaking, not only of *Circumcision*, but of keeping the whole Law, says, They were such as *neither They nor Their Fathers were able to bear*. And certainly was the Case our Own at this day, We should think the Penalty very excessive, were we to pay a *Bullock*, a *Goat*, a *Kid*, or a *Lamb*, according to our different Condition or Quality, for every such Peccadillo as a mere *Sin of Ignorance* only, against any of the Laws of the State under which we live: Of the *Jews* 'tis said, *against any of the Commandments of the Lord*, by reason of the *Divine Institution* of *Their Laws*; but yet they were Those Laws by which Their State was govern'd. Or if for committing any

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flight Trespas *wittingly* against our Neighbour, (which is also said to be *against the Lord*, by reason of his Commandment) we were to pay back not only *the Principal*, or the Value of it, be it of what kind soever, but a *fifth part more* to Him; and moreover, were to bring a *Ram* without blemish, a Trespas-Offering, for an *Atonement before the Lord*, as to the Governour of the State, that is, by way of *Satisfaction* to the Public Weal, for having transgress'd Those Laws, which were given by *GOD*, or under *his special* Appointment, for its greater Good. That the *Priest* particularly was appointed to make the *Offering* or *Atonement* on the *Altar of the Lord*, (so call'd, not only because these Things were offer'd *to Him*, but because It was made by *his Divine* Direction) was only for Order and Solemnity sake; to strike the Sinner with the greater Awe of *GOD*, and with a more religious Fear of *offending* against Those Laws which *he* had establish'd. For it is to be consider'd, that tho' the *Jewish* Polity was a *Theocracy*, or a Government under the Superintendence and Command of *GOD*, it was yet as much a *Secular Government*, that is, design'd for *Secular Ends* and *Purposes*, as any other Government upon Earth: And therefore when *Atonements* or *Expiations* were made by *its* Laws, they were no more than *Satisfactions* in a Temporal Sense, excusing from corporal Punishments, or *legally* fitting and preparing the Offerers for the *External Worship* of *God*; for This, tho' it was especially design'd for the Public Good, and

and the better Governing of the People, had in it notwithstanding a Mixture of *Religion*, as the Offerings were made to *GOD*, and by *His* Order, as their *Lord* and *King*.

Were it not *the Truth*, That the Legal Sacrifices atoned for Sin only in a *Political* Sense, they could not have been, what they are generally thought to have been, *Types* or *Figures* of that Great Sacrifice made of *the Lamb of God* for the Sins of the whole World. *Types* are Secular things, which bear some *faint Resemblance* to things of a Spiritual Nature: So the Paschal Lamb was a *Token* or *Sign*, that God would deliver the People of *Israel* from the Bondage of *Egypt*; and this was a *Type* prefiguring the Deliverance of all Mankind from the Bondage of *Sin*, by the Blood of *Christ*: And the Highpriest entring once a year into the *Holy Place*, was a *Type* of *Christ* entring into *Heaven* once for all, to appear in the *Presence* of *God* for us. In like manner, The Legal Sacrifices satisfying for the Sins of the People *temporally*, were a *Type* of *Christ* atoning by the Sacrifice of himself for the Sins of all Men *eternally*: But had they been Expiations of Sin, even for *any one* Sin, in a Spiritual and Eternal sense, they had not been a *Shadow* of good Things to come, but *the very Image* of the things; nay, had they *thus* atoned for Sin, the Great Atonement by the *Lamb of God* had been entirely Needless: For *had there been a Law* given, that could have given *Life*, verily *Righteousness*, or *Justification* before *God*, should have been by the *Law*. But the *Law* was not

of this Nature; It had no *such an Effect*, nor consequently was *ever intended* for it; and was therefore no more, than as a *School-master*, disciplining and training us up *unto Christ*, that *we might be justified by Faith* in Him.

However, tho' 'twas *weak, beggarly, and un-serviceable* in This Point, it had a *Moral Tendency*, and was therefore not unworthy of the *Supreme Moral Being* to appoint. This Tendency it had, as it was a *Means* then highly Expedient, for preserving the *Israelites* in the True Knowledge and Fear of God. That people had been *greatly corrupted* by the Superstitions of *Egypt*, and their Hearts so attach'd to Idolatry, that it was not easy to break them off from its *Usages and Customs*, as their Making the Golden Idol, on the first Recess of *Moses*, too evidently shews. And as the Minds of Men are not to be *forced*, but to be *drawn* to Truth, and so from Error, by natural Steps and Advances; 'tis impossible the *whole Work* of Reformation should be done of a sudden; For Truth gains Ground with *difficulty*, and but in a degree just as Mens Minds *open*, and their Judgments *enlarge* themselves; and we daily see, there is nothing more *stubborn*, nothing more *positive, refractory, conceited, and full of itself*, nothing a greater *Enemy* to Instruction, nor more *Unwilling* to be set right, than Prejudice and Prepossession are. Consider then the Task *Moses* had upon his hands, in founding his *Theocracy*! For tho' God was his Guide, his Protector, and Friend; yet God cannot but deal with Men *as Men*, except he was to alter their

their Nature, and new-mould them into *another* sort of Being: As they are Free-agents, he must treat with them, (whenever he condescends to do it) in the *most rational* and *most proper* manner, let the Occasion be what it will, for *working* upon their Hearts and Minds, in the State and Circumstances in which they are. Now considering, I say, that *That* people could not be utterly brought off from those *beggarly* Rites of Worship they had been *before* accustomed to; the most *natural Scheme* for a Prudent man to take, as well as for the Wisdom of God to direct, was, To indulge them their *outward Forms* of Worship, (which have neither Good nor Harm in them, but in the Application) and to change the *Object* thereof; instead of *an Idol*, commanding them to worship the *True God*, and not to offer any thing in a religious way but *before Him*. This was a *Favor* God shew'd them; as He may favour whom he pleases, even the *most Wicked*, and with what he pleases, so it tends to make them *Morally Good*: And the Pomp and Number of their Festivals and Decimations for the Use and Honor of *GOD*, of their Legal Separations, Purgations, Oblations, and such like, by *his Order* and *Appointment*, as they were fitted to their then present Taste and Capacity, were *chief Means* of keeping them from *Idolatry*, and retaining in their Hearts a true Sense of the *One God* of Heaven and Earth, which could not but be accompanied with a proportionable *Moral Practice*; for which *End alone* it can be granted in the Reason and Nature of things,

things, That God was the Author and Ap-
pointer of such *weak and beggarly Elements*.

I have insisted the longer upon this Head, because I take it to be a most material Point, to shew, That there was *no Remission* of Sins, nor any other *Spiritual* or *Eternal Benefit* conferr'd in the *Jewish* Sacrifices; the contrary Opinion having been the Source of many *strange* and *unwarrantable* Doctrines in the Christian Church. If this had not been imagined, On what foot could the Doctrine of the *Propitiatory Sacrifice* of the *Mass* for the *living* and the *dead*, have gain'd any Credit? Or that more absurd one, of a *Commemorative Sacrifice* in the *Lord's Supper*, conferring *Grace*, and *Pardon*, and *Eternal Life* on the worthy Receivers? But as it has been thought, the *Jewish* Sacrifices had such an Effect; it has therefore been concluded, at least an *Equal*, if not a *Superior*, Effect must be the Consequence of the *Christian* Ordinances: Whereas the Premises failing, the Conclusion falls to the ground. Some have imagin'd our Lord's Body *present*; and if it was so, have rationally enough formed a *real Sacrifice* upon it: But They that make a Sacrifice of a *Commemoration*, blunder egregiously; but never more, than when they think it *propitiatory* as well as *eucharistical*. This Giving more to Religion, than Religion is able to support, makes Sport for *Infidels*, and gives them such an Handle against *Revelation*, that 'tis become Necessary to argue in such a manner, as to make *Religion* consistent *with Reason*: And that is, to maintain, what

what is and ever will be *True* in spite of the World, That whatever the Advantages of *Reveal'd* Religion be, it can make *no Alteration* in our Moral Obligations; but God will still reward us *according to our Works*, and not for the sake of *Ritual Observances*: That is, He will do it on the Truth and Reason of things, as we have made *more or less* Progress towards the Perfection of our Nature, in *copying out* His Moral Excellencies, and *improving* our Own Minds.

Some Men of *Reflection* and *Thought*, who have seen, that this is, and cannot but be, the Natural and Inevitable Consequence of Moral Acting, I mean, A Retribution *proportionable* to Merit, or as Every Man's Deservings *shall be found to be*; have therefore concluded, no doubt *too hastily*, against the Reasonableness and Necessity of Human *Redemption*, and of course against *all other* Reveal'd Truths, which some way or other *depend* upon This, as either *preceding* or *following* it, by way of Preparation or unavoidable Consequence. They think, if God cannot but in the Nature of things reward and punish *Equitably*, according as Men have been Good or Bad, there was no Need of a *Saviour* to lay down his Life for us, to obtain *Those Rewards* in a Supernatural Manner: Nor can it, according to Them, *be Just* in God, to take away the Life of an Innocent, by way of Punishment, for the sake of the Guilty, to *purchase* Peace and Salvation for us; was it Necessary to confer Salvation on us, by a Means *purely* Supernatural. This Difficulty seems

seems to charge the Christian *Mediatorial* Scheme, with great Inconsistencies; but it merely arises, from their not carrying their Reflections far enough.

'Tis certain, The Innocent cannot be *justly punish'd* for the Guilty; nor can a Redeemer *possibly purchase* the Rewards just spoken of, which are due to Men on *Eternal Reasons*: But it is to be consider'd, That a Moral *imperfect Virtue* cannot in the Nature of things demand or expect to be rewarded with an *Eternal perfect Happiness*; nor is God in Justice obliged to bestow *such* an Happiness, upon any *Sinful* Creature, however penitent, or however vigilant and desirous to become Good. All that it can be expected he will do in such a Case, is but to *accept him to*, and *to give him*, a Degree of Happiness *proportioned* to the Pains he has taken, and the Proficiency he has made, towards *Moral Rectitude*: This, and no more, I say, is required by, or consistent with, the Divine Attribute of *perfect Justice*. Now 'tis certain, the Best of men have always been sensible of their *Natural Infirmary*, of their *Proneness to Sin*, and their *repeated Acts* of it, in some degree or other, even notwithstanding the *best spent Life* in Piety and Virtue: And therefore even They, if left only to the Law of Nature for a Retribution *according to their Works*, could never be *really Happy*, but must be in *some measure Miserable*. And as the *Wages of Sin is Death*, and *Immortal Life* never brought to light but by the Gospel; perhaps even That *imperfect Happiness*,

ness, tho' of a *longer* Duration as Men had been *more* or *less* Good, would not have been *Eternal*. How can it then be said, That Redemption is *not necessary* to obtain for Sinners, tho' *constantly* endeavouring to be *sincerely* Good, or *truly* repenting if they have not, a *Complete* and *Everlasting* Happiness; if it has pleased God, in the great Condescensions of his Mercy, to admit of it?

Again, it should be considered, That such a Condescension as This, is a *mere Act of Favor*, to which God could be moved by *no other* Reason, at least apparent to Us, but that of his Own superabundant *Goodness* and *Compassion* towards Man; and therefore may dispense it on what Consideration he thinks fit, so it be such an one as has a *Moral Tendency*, and is most likely to be a *Means* of working up his Sinful Creatures to a true Penitence and Newness of Life. And as *This* is not an Exemption from Moral Duty, nor possibly *can be*, except God could alter the *Eternal* Reasons and Relations of things, which we are sure *he cannot*; but an Assurance of a supereminent and altogether undeserved Bounty, (for *Eternal Life is the Gift of God thro' Jesus Christ*) bestowed on Those that labour with Sincerity to be truly Good and Holy; nothing can tend more to *exalt* a Man's Virtue, than his fore-knowing the Great Mercy which God *designs* for him, on the Truth of his Moral Practice, upon *such a Consideration* as this.

Moreover, if the Son of God, who is every where represented in Scripture as a *truly Divine*

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Person, joining with his Father in the same gracious Act, freely offer'd to come into the World in Human Flesh, and to lay down his Life for us, in order to make us Sensible of our Want of Redemption by Him as *Mediator*, on which account only God had determined to shew us *This Mercy*; and also, of the inexpressible Love of God, in even accepting Him, in that Capacity, on our behalf, which he was not obliged to do: I see not but the Iniquities of us all, that is, the unavoidable Consequence of our Iniquities, the final Punishment of our corrupt Nature, may be truly said to be laid upon him; and, that This voluntary Offering of himself for our Sakes, may be properly call'd, A Sacrifice, an Atonement, or a Propitiation for Sin, and no less be accepted by God as such, tho' the Person suffering was purely Innocent, and died on our account only. Because the Whole was an Act of Divine Mercy, freely done and freely accepted, without any Tie of Justice or Obligation whatsoever.

All the fault is, in representing this Transaction, as Most Divines do, on the foot of infinite Justice, as if God could not forgive, even Good men labouring after Perfection, nor take them into his Eternal Favor, on any Consideration but an Equivalent of infinite Merit; which both limits the Arbitrary Power of God, and lessens his Love to Mankind, not to say it entirely destroys it: Whereas, the Scriptures always set it forth, from one end of them to the other, as an Act of pure Mercy, and as an Instance of the most amazing Love; design'd

to win us in the most effectual manner to the Love of God and Goodness, and to the *continual Practice* of an holy and virtuous Life. And 'tis certain, *Justice* had so little hand in it, that had God proceeded upon that foot, he could in no wise have forgiven us; for to spare the Guilty at any rate, or on any consideration whatsoever, is not the Work of *Justice*, but of *Mercy*: Nor could He have rewarded us with the perfect Joys of Heaven; but only with an imperfect Retribution, in proportion to our Works.

Nor does this in the least derogate from the Merits, or Satisfaction, of our Blessed Saviour, as some may unwarily think, for want of thinking in a rational consistent manner; for Satisfaction is as proper in the way of *Mercy*, as of *Justice*, supposing that the Legal Sacrifices, which were a Type or Figure of the Great Atonement, were (as no doubt they were) Satisfactory: For they were undeniably an Institution of *Mercy*, not of *Justice*. Had they been founded on *Justice*, the Sinner ought himself to have suffer'd Punishment personally, for the Trespas (very often) whereby he had trespassed; and therefore making Satisfaction by an Offering, was done by an Act of Grace, and the accepting of a Bullock or Ram on that account a mere Favor. In like manner, God accepting the Death of *Christ* as an Atonement for the Sins of Men, was the greatest Grace and Favor he ever shew'd to Mankind; but as he did accept it, it was to Him Satisfactory, and gives Us a Right to apply to Him in all our Wants with Confidence thro' His alone Merits. Not

that the Merits of *Christ* were so necessary to satisfy for Sin, that God could not accept us to Life Eternal on any less a Consideration; for His *Mercy*, like all his other Properties, being infinite, that is, without Bound or Limitation, might have accepted what Satisfaction he thought fit: But because he would shew us the Greatness of his Love, and his most earnest Desire of winning all those to whom This Glad-Tydings should come, to the Practice of Moral Goodness, in discovering his highest Indignation and most irreconcilable Hatred against Sin; it was, that he pitch'd upon Him for our Mediator, and his Death for a Propitiation. GOD so loved the World, that he gave his Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have Everlasting Life. So that the Merits of His Death were not essentially Necessary in the Reason and Nature of things, but were only made so by the sole Will and Determination of God; and that founded on no other Reason, than His immense Love and boundless Compassion for us.

Do I need to repeat it, that the Merits of *Christ* can be effectual for obtaining the Pardon and Acceptance of such Men only, as strive as much as lies in them, to renew and perfect their decayed Nature? For this Every Man being obliged to by the Eternal Reasons of things, Nothing that God can do for Mankind, not even the greatest Favor he can shew them, no, not his Son dying for us, can any way excuse us from our best Endeavours to attain this End; because, every Thing Re-
veal'd

veal'd is but a *Means* to Virtue. And yet 'tis plain from the Text just quoted, That the best Reward which Natural Religion can confer on our most sincere Endeavours, is *Destruction* and *Perishing*, in comparifon of that *Everlasting Life*, which is bestowed on Good Men for the fake of *Jefus Chrift*. The Reason is no other, than what I have before intimated : The Reward of an *unfinish'd* Virtue can be no more, than an *incomplete* Happinefs; but the Recompenfe of Virtue thro' Faith in *Chrift*, is Life, and Joy, and Happinefs *for ever*.

This fhews, that the next Excellency to its *bringing Life and Immortality to light*, is, that the Chriftian Religion carries Morality to the *bigheft Pitch* of Purity and Perfection; becaufe nothing, but the moft *exalted Virtue*, or a *Repentance* every way *Equal* to it, which is a *thorough Change* of Mind and Difpofition, from Sin to Goodnefs, and to the conftant Love of it, is *rewarded* by it. It came into the World, when Moral Philofophy was in its greateft Glory, and had greatly *refined* and *polish'd* both the Manners and Maxims of Men thro'out the greateft part of the *known* World; but if we compare the moft finish'd Pieces of the *Heathen Moralifts* with the Gofpel of *Jefus Chrift*, their Defects are too palpable to admit their being put on a Level with it. Not that I would here have it thought, that *Natural Religion* was by the *Chriftian* render'd really *more complete* and *perfect*, than it ever had been; for as it is *founded* on the Eternal Truth of things, and their Natural Relations and Fittnefses one
to

to another, it is in itself *Immutable*, and always was *the same*, and would have been so, tho' God had created *No rational Beings*, even on the supposition that he would or could create them: But the *Notion or Knowledge* of it was now taught more *purely and perfectly* than it ever had been; and urged upon our Practice by the best *Means* and most prevailing *Motives*, that God himself can give us; as far as our Ideas of things are, at present, able to inform us, *What He can do*.

There is nothing now therefore New in *Morality*, no New Precept of it superadded by the *Christian Religion*, as if That Rule was in itself *deficient*, or fundamentally so, before; for *Natural Religion* was then in its full Force, *written upon the Heart*, just as it is now; and Moral Virtue every Man's Duty, *to the best of his Knowledge and Power*, as much as it is now: But it was enforced by *stronger Reasons*, and supported by a *better Hope*, than it could claim on the foot of mere Nature and Reason. *All its Hope* before was, of a *proportionable Reward*: *Christ* has promised and procured for us a *Blessing*, which is far more than a *Reward*; 'tis a *free Gift* of God to us, exceeding all proportion. What a *Virtuous man* can expect from *Natural Religion* is, that God *will be just to him* in a *future State*, according to the Diligence he has used, and the Pains he has taken, in *this*, to renew his depraved Disposition, and to reach as near as may be to the *Perfection* of his Nature. A Man that has taken No pains for this End, has not even so much Hope of Reward

as this; and is therefore as Weak and Silly in *standing up* for Natural Religion, as he is in *rejecting* Revelation, except he actually reforms his Morals. He has indeed an *Expectation* of Justice from God, as much as the other; but, without any View of Good: Punishment is his Recompense, and Misery his Portion. But a good *Christian*, thro' the Death and Resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, has good Reason to believe, that God will be more than barely *Just*, even that he will be *Merciful* to him, in the other World; that is, Not only confer on him an Happiness *proportioned* to his Moral Virtue, (which must always be as short of true and complete Happiness, as that Virtue was of Perfection) but that moreover, thro' his Faith in *Christ*, he will give him a Complete and Perfect Happiness, quite beyond any Natural Deservings of his own, for the sake of *Him who died for him*. This is that *Life and Immortality* which is discovered to us by the Gospel, according to the Power of God, who hath saved us from final Destruction; not according to our Works, which were insufficient for it, but according to his own Purpose and Grace, which he has given us in *Jesus Christ*, before the World began. The *Grace* is, before eternal Times; that is, From all Eternity, God, foreseeing we should fall from our Original Purity, purposed to bestow this Grace upon us, this Favor, this Mercy, which he was not bound to in Justice, but was only moved to it by mere Good-will and Compassion for his Creatures.

Salvation

Salvation then is by no means That which *most Men* take it to be, A Saving from the Punishment of *All their Sins*, upon a *strong Faith* in *Christ*, and a *deep repenting Sorrow* at the End of an *ill-spent Life*; in which they have given themselves the greatest Loose in Lust and Licentiousness, and without ever *seriously*, or perhaps *at all*, endeavouring to *reform* their corrupt Nature, or to *get the better* of their Vices; for if This were in earnest the Case, the Gospel would be so far from having a *Moral Tendency*, as I have largely shewn all Divine Revelation cannot *but have*, that it would be a Cloak for Sin and a Nursery of Vice, in making Men at last Happy on so *slight* a Penance: But it is only A Saving from the *Eternal Consequences* of the *Depravity* of human Nature, which a Man cannot utterly subdue, and which yet subjects him to an Eternity of *imperfect Happiness*, for coming short of *perfect Purity*, even after his best Endeavours to come as near it as he can. This *Bestness* of Endeavour to gain an Habit of Virtue, and a thorough Love of God and all good things, we are bound to by the *Law of Reason*; and as that stands on the Foundation of *Eternal Truth*, nothing can shake it, nothing make the *least* Change or Alteration therein; but if God *will save us*, let the Means he does it by be what it will, it must be only as we strive to fulfil *That Law of Reason*, by endeavouring to the Utmost of our Power to gain such a *Virtuous Habit*.

For this reason it is, that *our Lord* has made *Morality* a *chief part* of his Gospel, and described

bed it to us in the *most perfect* manner; because he knew, Moral Goodness is the *Natural Duty* of a Moral Agent, from which nothing can exempt him or set him free; and that *His Coming* into the World, and all the happy Consequences of it, were only design'd as *Means* to make us perform it better: Not to be *pure Religion* to us, or things to be *believed* or *observed*, in the *lieu* of Duty; but Helps, and Motives, and Encouragements to its *more refined* and *exalted* Practice. The Moral Precepts then, that we find so often and generally intermixt with the Doctrines of Christianity, are *no part* of the Christian Revelation; but were as incumbent on us *before* it was revealed as now, and would have been *equally* so, tho' it had never been revealed; being inseparable from our Nature as *Moral Agents*, and bound upon our Conscience by *Eternal Obligations*. Which Reflection, I think, will light us into a *different*, and perhaps into a *clearer*, Knowledge of the *Christian Sacraments*, which are *External Things*, than is generally had of them.

The Christian Revelation is only those Doctrines of Faith which the Gospel teaches, *even the Mystery which hath been hid from Ages, and from Generations, but now is made manifest to the Saints; which is Christ, the Hope of Glory.* He, and every thing relating to him as *the Lord of Life*, of that Eternal and Immortal Life, undeserved by Us, but brought to light by Him for our sakes, is *Christian Truth*; but all those Precepts of Morality, the Practice of which the Gospel inculcates in *all Wisdom and*
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Knowledge,

Knowledge, whereby we are *to be presented perfect in Christ Jesus*, is *Natural Truth*: And these are to be carefully distinguish'd, for a right Understanding of what the Scriptures require of us, with respect to *Sacramental Rites*.

As the Law of Nature, that is, the *Precepts of Morality*, is of Eternal Obligation, it neither does nor can make any part of *that Covenant*, which Christians are supposed to enter into with God at their *Baptism*; because, whether baptiz'd or no, Men are *equally obliged* to the Practice of it. And it is not the *most solemn Vow*, that can be invented and made to the Performance of Natural Religion, which is able in any sort to *add Weight* to the Obligation of it; but whether Men vow or no, the Law is *in full Force*, and will as much condemn a Man for not obeying it, tho' he had *never vow'd* at all, as if he had bound his Soul in a *thousand Resolutions* without performing one of them. A man indeed will be accountable for a rash Vow if he breaks it, because it was his own Voluntary Act, and Repentance is the unavoidable Consequence of it; but it can in no wise add any thing to the Force of a Law, which is *Eternal and Unalterable*. Were a Man to vow, he would *perpetually* live a good Moral Life, it would be the Height of Folly and Rashness; because, his corrupt Nature will always *hinder him* from doing it: And were he to promise, he would do it *to the utmost* of his Power, 'tis saying nothing; because, his Moral Nature *obliges him* to That, whether he will or no, or whether he regards it or no.

And

And as a Man does not bind himself in a Covenant by Baptism to discharge *inviolably* the Law of Nature; so neither can he, that he *will believe* All the Articles of the Christian Faith. This indeed he professes at the time he is baptized, *viz.* That he does *then* believe them; But that he will *always continue* in the same Mind, is more than he can either vow or promise. A man's Faith is *govern'd* by his Reason, and tho' he may now *believe* a Thing, yet if afterwards he shall see Reason to change his Mind, he cannot but *disbelieve* it: The Evidence of Truth will determine his Judgment, in spite of him, as far *as he sees it*, and in the manner *that he sees it*; and 'tis certain, God cannot tie a Man down by Covenant, to do *always* what is *not always* in his Power of doing. 'Tis inconsistent with his *perfect* Justice, and *all-seeing* Wisdom. Besides, it was the Custom in the primitive times, whatever it is now, to baptize the *Adult only*, and to instruct them *thoroughly* in the Principles of the Christian Religion *before Baptism*: The Question then is, Whether upon seeing the Truth of the Christian Doctrines, a Man is not *immediately* obliged to believe them, nay, whether he can avoid doing it; and consequently, Whether a *Necessity* does not lie upon him of doing it, in the Nature of the Thing itself, tho' he *never was baptiz'd*? This must be answered affirmatively. And therefore, Baptism cannot be entring into a Covenant with God to perform *That*, which a Man is equally obliged to perform without it; nor could *our Lord* ever institute it for *such a purpose*, to which it serves in no Sense at all.

What then is *Baptism*?----Let us consider it, and it will appear to be Nothing more on our parts than a Profession of Faith in the Doctrine of the Three *Divine Persons*, which Doctrine contains all the other subaltern Doctrines of the Gospel; or in other words, 'tis an *Explicit Profession* of the whole Christian Faith, made by an *External Rite*, to satisfy the Church that we are of the Number of those that do believe. As Circumcision was not an Entering into Covenant with God, but only a *Token* or *Sign* of God's Promise (which He calls *His Covenant*) on the one hand, and of *Abraham's* believing it on the other, That in his Seed all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed; so Baptism is an outward Sign, as of God's having fulfilled This Promise in his Son *Jesus*, so of our Faith of Receiving Salvation thro' Him, and thro' Him only. God's *Second Covenant* with Mankind, That all that live righteous Lives, and strive all they can after Moral Rectitude, shall be Eternally saved by *Jesus Christ*; is not made in Baptism, but was made in the beginning, even from the Foundation of the World. The Gospel declares this Truth, and the Manner and Method of it, and we profess to believe it, as it is declared; but a Man is not saved for believing it, or for making a *Profession* of believing it, which should be the Case if it was a Stipulation, and one part answer'd the other; but he is saved thro' *Christ*, for his *Moral Goodness*, or for his having sincerely endeavour'd to obey the Commandments of God in Piety, Sobriety, Justice and Truth, and such like other Virtues;

Virtues; which is, in short, no other than *Natural Religion*, and That Faith we *profess* in Baptism is only *a Means of Grace*, afforded us by God as a *Favor or Mercy* to us, that we may perform it better.

A Christian has not any Privilege of Acceptance *with GOD*, more than other Men have, as if He was to be *rather saved* than others; for that is not God's Design in bringing him into the Church: 'Tis said distinguishingly, that *GOD is the Saviour of all Men; tho' especially of them that believe*. He saves *All men*, and equally accepts *All men*, if they be Morally Good, in every Nation upon Earth; but He is *especially* the Saviour of *the Faithful*, as he has afforded in his own mere Good-will, or for some Reasons in his Government of the World which we know nothing of, *better and more powerful* Motives to Them of *working out their Salvation*, than he has to others: But this is *All a Favor* to Us, which we must account for if we abuse it; but does not in the least affect the Salvation of others, who have not *such Means and Motives*. They have only *less to account for*, if they fail of being Good; but they have certainly *sufficient* Means of being so, and of being saved also, even thro' *Jesus Christ*; or else, it would argue God of Partiality and Injustice. But God is *not partial* in this particular; for no Man is saved for *his Faith in Christ*, but only for *his good Works*, his Works of Morality, thro' *Christ*. 'Tis said indeed, *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; and, he that believeth not, shall be damned*:

damned: But this is not spoken of *all Men* in general, but of *Christians*, or of *such Men* as have the Christian Truths *duly laid* before them, only. *Such Men*, if They *believe and are baptized*, ---- Baptism is a Symbol of *inward Purity*, and always implies *moral Rectitude* ---- *Such Men*, if they are *better'd* by their Faith, and it becomes a special Means of *reforming* them, shall no doubt be rewarded with *Eternal Life*: And if *They believe not*, ---- This is not spoken of a *Rational*, but a *Moral* Faith; not of the *mere Assent* of the Understanding to *rational Evidence*, which is *necessary* and *involuntary*; but of a *chosen voluntary Unbelief*, as when a Man carelessly or perversely refuses to *attend to*, and so *rejects*, the Reasons offer'd for his Conviction, ---- In this sense, if *They believe not*, they *shall be damned*; that is, judged and condemned for their *obstinate Behaviour*, for their *Disobedience* and their *Immorality*, for *choosing to live* against the Principles of Reason and Virtue, rather than be informed of their Error, that they might *reform* and *amend* their Lives and Conversations. So that at last, a Christian stands on *the same foot* of Divine Acceptance as other Men do: He is no *more sure* of being saved than They, but only as he has *more gracious Means* of working out his Salvation. He is finally rewarded with Bliss, if he lives well; and consign'd to Punishment and Misery, not for *believing wrong*, but for *doing Evil*.

Now if all men are upon the same bottom as to the Certainty of their Salvation thro' *Jesus Christ*, that is, Their living good and
virtuous

virtuous Lives, according to the different Means and Light they have, whether *baptized* or *not baptized*; (which is as *infallibly* True, as Natural Religion is the *indispensible* Duty of a Moral Agent, and as Every Man shall be recompensed *according to his Works*) it must be concluded, that the Rite of Baptism is not *absolutely necessary* to the Salvation of Men, no, not of any one Man upon Earth, nor yet *generally* so, tho' it be sometimes so express'd; for if this was True, Lord! what would become of the *generality* of Mankind, who know nothing of the Matter? But it is only a *Means*, with which God has *favour'd* us, highly *Expedient* for promoting or carrying Men forward in the Paths of Virtue, and no doubt to a *greater degree* of Glory, in proportion to their *higher Advances* in Moral Rectitude; as to a *greater degree* of Punishment, if it fails of its *proper Effect*. In this sense, It is *the Baptism of Repentance for the Remission of Sins*; as it is fitted and design'd to stir up in us a sincere Desire of growing Good, and a firm Resolution of being so, in order to obtain That *Remission*: And in this sense, *None can enter*, that is, no Christians can enter, *into the Kingdom of GOD, except they be born of Water and of the Spirit*; or regenerated in the Spirit and Disposition of their Minds, by the Motive of what they profess in that *External Rite*: That they may thereby obtain, thro' the meritorious Death of *Christ*, that immortal *Life* which he has *brought to Light*, and which by the Law of Nature we had no Right to *claim*, nor Reason to *expect*.

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The World, however, has been led into a Belief; that this Sacrament is *truly* and *really* Necessary, some way or other, for *gaining* the Divine Acceptance, and have thence concluded for various *Benefits* and *Privileges* conferr'd thereby on the Baptized, which in no wise belong to it; and by drawing a parallel between *This* and *Circumcision*, tho' absurdly enough, have not in the least question'd the Truth of this *imaginary* Doctrine. Because Circumcision was administred when the *Jewish* Children were *eight days* old, 'tis imagined some Extraordinary Benefits were *conferr'd* by it, which made them in a peculiar manner *GOD's people*; and that *without it*, they had no Claim to His Divine Acceptance: 'Tis certain the later *Jews* themselves thought so, and were therefore very bold and positive in reprobating all Mankind besides. This Thought, I doubt not, gave Rise to the *Necessity* of Infant-Baptism, and to the *continued Use* of it, as if none but baptized Persons could be really *Members of Christ* and *Children of GOD*; whenas there was really no Truth in the first Supposition, as has been shewn before, nor consequently can be in the latter. When *Abraham* at first circumcised his Family, it was only as a *Token* of his *own Faith* in the Promises of *God*, as *God* had required it from him, not of *Theirs* who were circumcised: It was the same in all others after him; not because it was or could be any Advantage to the *Child*, but to the *Parent*, who professing the same Faith in the same manner, had thereby a *Right* to expect the

the same Blessing. A Covenant is a *voluntary* Thing, made upon Judgment and Choice, and by the mutual Consent of the *contracting* Parties; but a Child of *eight Days old*, had no Judgment or Will, nor could possibly enter into any Covenant with God for Want of Ability to *consent* and *stipulate*. In like manner, Children can enter into no Covenant now with God at their Baptism; for they are *incapable* of it, and cannot be bound by what *another* promises without their Knowledge. If they contract any thing, 'tis *afterwards*; when they come to *know* what is True, and *consent* to believe and do it: But if they *know* it, there is no Need to *consent*; for the Nature of the Thing *obliges* both to Faith and Practice, and they'll be accountable for the Neglect or Transgression of Duty, on that foot *alone*. And therefore, as I said before, Baptism is not *Necessary*, but *Expedient*: It is Useful, by the Solemnity of *so awful* a Profession, to fix a Man's Thoughts on the Mercy and Loving-kindness of God, and by the daily Consideration of it, to *enliven* and *improve* his Virtue.

In this View it has a *Moral Tendency*, and may be therefore supposed, and granted, in *This Sense* to come from God, and be enjoin'd us by Him as *a Means of Grace*. Such an open Profession of Faith, is not only a *voluntary* Act of the Person baptized, but it implies him to have been *thoroughly instructed* beforehand, as the Scriptures every where, speaking

of This Sacrament, *teach* he should be, in the Doctrines of Christianity; and so being a Christian by *Knowledge* and *Conviction*, 'tis most likely such a Profession and Acknowledgment will *rationaly influence* his Practice, especially by the Divine Spirit often *bringing to his remembrance* what he has thus own'd and profess'd; than which, nothing can be a *greater Motive*, or a stronger *additional* Obligation. But to suppose it a Covenant we make with God, To renounce *All* sinful Lusts and immoral Actions, To believe *All* the Articles of Faith as they are generally explain'd, and, To obey *All* the Commandments of God throughout our whole Life, and not to expect God's Mercy in *Jesus Christ* but on *This Condition*; is so far from having a *Moral Tendency*, that when a Man comes to see, *He* has undertaken, or rather I should say (as the Matter is now) *others* for him, what *He* never *did*, nor ever *can*, perform; That Sin *adheres* to him whether he will or no, That he cannot *understand* many Things he is required to believe, Nor is *able to fulfil* All the Commandments of God in his present State of Imperfection; his Endeavours are *dispirited*, and he naturally *despairs* of ever doing his Duty to any Acceptance; nay, he looks upon it as a plain Impossibility, which God *never required* from him, nor *can require*, and therefore grows thoroughly negligent and careless about *Religion*, as if it was all a Juggle, mere Priestcraft and Imposition. To say, *He* does not undertake

take this *absolutely*, but *conditionally*, God being his Helper; is saying Nothing: The Words are *literal* and *express*, and 'tis well known by *universal* Experience, that God *never did help* any Man to perform *such a Duty* as this; and 'tis reasonable to believe, he *never will*, nor *ever can*. 'Tis not the Duty of a Man, or a Christian, to renounce *all Sin* or to promise to do *all Good*; but to be as *pure* as he can be, and as *good* as he can be, by his best Endeavours and the Grace of God: This he is bound to by his Moral Nature, and Religion only comes in by its Means and Motives, its Doctrines and its Sacraments, to give him Life and Encouragement in this; but the *Perfection* of his Being, like the *Completion* of his Happiness, is the sole Work of God, not to be expected here, but to be *bestowed* on him hereafter; for the Merits and thro' the Mediation of *Christ* our Saviour.

Now if the Sacrament of Baptism be Not an *Entring* into Covenant with God, (as we are sure it *cannot* be, Because tho' God himself may promise and covenant, in his own *Goodwill*, what he pleases, as he has Power to do for us *graciously* and *mercifully* what he pleases, and has nothing which can hinder him from performing his Word to us, so that *he is faithful*, and *cannot deny himself*; yet We, *poor*, *sinful*, *infirm*, and *inconstant* Creatures, can promise or covenant Nothing in Religion with any *Certainty*, except it be, That we *shall certainly break our Promise*, in one Point or other: And to promise or covenant, that we

will do *our Best* in all Moral and Christian Duties, is (tho' we ought always to beg of God, that he will by his Spirit *enable us* to do our Best) trifling and ridiculous; because we are Naturally *bound to do it*, without any Promise or Engagement whatsoever, and at our Eternal Peril be it, if we do not always *seriously* and *sincerely resolve* to do it) now if This, I say, be so; much less is That of the Lord's Supper a *Renewal* of this Covenant so much contended for, which is purely *imaginary*, without any Foundation in Reason or Scripture.

That it has none in *Reason*, I have (I think) sufficiently demonstrated; and also, that the *Scripture* in this Point concurs with it: And allowing this, the Lord's Supper *is not, cannot be, nor was intended to be*, by *Jesus Christ*, a Renewal of any *such* Covenant. But to clear up this Difficulty, in another View: It is certain, 'tis out of the Rule and Method of *all Covenants* upon Earth, so much as *to talk* of the Renewal of them, before the Pact is made, much more *to appoint* the Renewal of them, before such a Pact. All this is *out* of the Order, and *against* the Reason, of things: And yet this is the Absurdity, of supposing the Lord's Supper to be a *Renewal* of the Baptismal Vow. *We* indeed receive the Lord's Supper *after* Baptism, but it was not *so instituted*. I do not mean, that the Lord's Supper was appointed to be received by Christians in every Age before Baptism; for the *Apostolical* Practice shews the

the Contrary: But that *The Supper* was instituted by our Lord, before *Baptism* was commanded by *Him*. And perhaps, if I should say, it was administered by *Him* to Persons that *never had been baptized*, it would not be inconsistent with Christian Truth: And consequently, it was no Renewal of the Vow to *Them*. But my Argument is properly This: Our Lord did not say to his Disciples, *Go, teach all Nations, baptizing them*, till after his Resurrection, nay, not till *just before* his Ascension, which was *forty days* after it; but he *instituted* the Lord's Supper, and, as I just said, *administered* it, the Night before his Passion: And can it be thought, he appointed the *Renewal* of the *pretended* Covenant, so long before he appointed the *Covenant itself*? Could the Son of God, who is *Truth* and *Wisdom*, act in so Unwise and Absurd a manner? Believe it who can: But I am persuaded our Blessed Saviour never required *Me*, nor any *other* Christian, to believe a Doctrine so perfectly *Useless*, as well as *Contradictory*.

Supposing Baptism was a *Covenant*: Is it not a *standing Offer* of Pardon and Peace to all that truly *repent them* of their Sins, and turn to God in *Newness* of heart? What else means the *Prayer* of our Lord, which teaches *every Man living*, at least in the Christian Church, to pray *daily* to God that his Sins *may be forgiven*? Has he taught us to pray *in vain*, and given us Rules without *any Reason*? No, certainly. And therefore, were it a Covenant with
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GOD, it is not a *few* Sins, nay, not the Sins of a Man's *whole Life*, that can *break it*. Nothing but Apostasy, nothing but downright Denying the Faith of *Christ*, is sufficient for this. And how then can a Person who comes to the Lord's Supper, and thereby acknowledges his Faith in *Christ*, and his Hope in his *Death and Resurrection*, be said to *renew* a Covenant which he had *not broken*? Or, to what Purpose must he do it? To gain an *Acceptance* from GOD, or any greater *Privilege* than he had before? That's impossible: Because the Divine Acceptance does not follow *External Rites*, but *Inward Purity*; and all the Privileges of a Christian, consider'd purely as a Christian, are not the Effects of *Sacraments*, but of *Faith*. It is by his *Faith in Christ* that a Man grows Good, and repents of his Sins in Hope of *Pardon* thro' his Blood: It is *by Faith* that even the Sacraments themselves have any Efficacy, or are of any Worth in Religion, towards *cleansing* the Soul or *purifying* our Nature: And it is *by the Faith* of every Person who has had the Knowledge of *Christ* vouchsafed unto him, that hereafter the Reward of Immortal Life shall *crown* his Obedience.

The *Lord's Supper* then renews no Covenant, not even (if you please to call it so) the Covenant of *Faith*. For, Whatever Truths it has pleas'd GOD to reveal, we do in no wise by Baptism enter into any Covenant *to believe*; for we no sooner see the Truths in a convincing Light, but we *are forced* to believe them, whether

ther we will or no: And if we should promise we will *study* the Belief of them, or apply our Minds *diligently* to the Discovery of what is True, as far as the Salvation of our Souls is concern'd; this we are obliged to by *Reason* and the *Morale* of our Nature, even previous to any Covenant that can be made by us. But was it otherwise, (for I'm willing to give the Objector all the fair play I can) yet even This *supposed* Covenant, the Lord's Supper does *not renew*. Every *worthy* Communicant brings *Faith in Christ* [and to the *Unworthy* we allow *no Benefit*] to the Holy Table; and therefore he *cannot renew* that, which he already has: He may indeed *enliven* and *strengthen* it; but that is a Consideration of another Nature. 'Tis the same with respect to Moral Goodness: A *worthy* Communicant either brings That by *Habit*, or by a *true Repentance*; and therefore *cannot* renew the Vow of *that* by the Lord's Supper, which he beforehand comes *resolved* to fulfil and practise. In short, this Sacrament is only design'd as a Spur to Virtue, by bringing to our Remembrance what *Christ* has *done* and *suffer'd* for us, and how much we owe to Him and Ourselves for the *Purchase* of such a Benefit: To Him, who has redeem'd us by *this Blood*; and to our Own Souls, which are the Objects of *so great a Mercy*.

But to make this Matter still more clear and intelligible, I must have Recourse to the Distinction I have frequently made use of, of a *Moral Tendency*; for whatever wants *This* in
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Reveal'd Religion, is no part of *That Religion*, nor can possibly come from a *pure and holy God*: But must be brought into it by the *Corruptions of Men*, and with no other view, but to serve some *vicious End or Purpose*. Such is the *Doctrine of a Renewal of Covenant*, in the Lord's Supper: It tends so much to *corrupt and vitiate the Morals of Men*, and to *encourage the Practice of Vice and Immorality*, and that in so plain, direct, and undeniable a manner; that I cannot but wonder, it has so *generally pass'd* without Observation. We are apt to look on the favourable side, and to think, that *Renewing of Vows, or Covenants*, is a Help to Religion: I doubt it is seldom found so; but rather a *Snare*, and a *Temptation*, to the more frequent Violation of them. When a Man is once persuaded, that he can renew *his Covenant of Mercy and Pardon* with Almighty God, and make all Matters up again thro' *Christ* his Saviour, whenever he pleases to set himself to the Examination of his Life, and to the usual Preparation for the Sacrament; how slight must he naturally think of *that Vow*, which he can renew *at pleasure*? How *easy* a Being must he take God to be, who is *so soon reconciled* to him; not on a *constant Habit* of Virtue, which Reason and the Nature of things demand of him to the utmost of his power; but on a *formal Going round* in an Endless Circle of Sinning and Vowing, again and again, to no purpose? This cannot but *ensnare* his Heart, and *draw him on* to sinning with *greater Frequency* and *less Terror*, than otherwise he would do; sup-
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posing his Duty was represented to him as a *Perpetual Progress* in Well-doing, and the *Eucharistical Rite* of the *Lord's Supper* of no other Advantage but as it is a *Means of Grace*, in the sense of stirring him up to his Duty, by the most serious and awful Remembrance of the *Death of Christ*, and of the *Benefits* we shall hereafter receive thereby, that is, the *Pardon of Sin* and *Eternal Life*, supposing us truly *sincere* and *constant* in our Endeavours to obtain them. No Man that thinks, but must see, There is a *great Difference* in the Moral Influence of these Two Doctrines; and that as the one is a *Favourer* of Vice, so the other is an *Enemy* to it, and a *Patron* of Virtue.

It is generally supposed that *Remission of Sins* and *Sanctifying Grace* are obtain'd for us, and confer'd upon us, by *This Sacrament*, as it is a *Memorial* propitiating God, that is, a *Real Sacrifice* propitiating God; for whatever *propitiates* God *expiates* Sin, and nothing *expiates* Sin but *Sacrifice*. In Religion there is not, nor ever was, but *One Propitiation* with God for Sin, and that is the *Death* of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. That of the *Sacrament* is not founded upon any *Reveal'd Truth*, but upon the fanciful Supposition of Men, that it bears some Resemblance to the *Jewish Sacrifices*, and as an *External Rite* succeeds in lieu of them; which yet did not satisfy but in a Temporal Sense, as a Political Institution, to the *purifying of the Flesh* only, as I before proved: And therefore as They did not obtain Pardon

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in a *Spiritual Sense*, so neither does This Sacrament convey any Pardon *at all*. Were we to suppose it, it would throw it under the same Difficulty as the *Legal Sacrifices* laboured with, and in the same manner, of having *no Moral Tendency*, and of being consequently an *Encouragement* to Sin.

According to this Notion, This Sacrament was not design'd as a Means of *provoking us* to Virtue, but was properly instituted as a Means for *quitting Scores* with the Almighty from time to time; that, when a Man comes to die, he may have *little or nothing* to account for, but go into the *other World* with the more *Assurance of Hope*, having so well settled the Affairs of that in *This*. This at least must be said to be an *easy Scheme* for the Sinner: It lulls him in Security with respect to *Sin*, and makes him not much concern'd about the Practice of *Virtue*: It draws off his Thoughts from the *Absolute Necessity* of Good Works, and of that *Continual Proficiency* which the *Laws of Reason* require him to make towards the Perfection of his Nature, and *without which* the Scripture itself maintains, there is no Hope of Mercy from God in *Christ*: It makes him rely on *External Rites*, more than *Internal Goodness*; and on the *Happy Return* of Sacraments for purifying his Soul, more than on *Acquiring* a constant unchangeable Habit of Moral Virtue, which alone can purify it. So he does but now and then *look back* upon an ill-spent Life, and *wish* he had acted otherwise, and in this sorrowful Mood

Mood *approach* the Holy Table; (for no more Repentance than this is necessary for a Man, that *expects Remission of Sins* by the Lord's Supper; because, he does not pretend to be *habitually* Good, but only *occasionally* so; *sanctified by GOD* in an Extraordinary manner, and not by the Ordinary Course of *his own Endeavours*) he is *sure* of Divine Acceptance, and of having his Pardon *seal'd* in Heaven: Which is such a preposterous Doctrine, so opposite to the *True End* of Religion, (which is to *reform the Soul*, and to *purge it* as much as possible from the Dross of Natural Corruption) that it cannot but be *False*, for want of a *Moral Tendency*.

Any thing that tends to excuse a Man from a Constant Virtue, or in any degree to palliate a Life of Sin, *cannot procede* from the Spirit of that Great and Holy Being, which is infinitely and perfectly *Moral*. This is unchangeably True, in the Eternal Nature and Reason of things; and to deny *This Truth*, is to give up *all Religion* whatsoever, and to make it no better than an Encouragement to *Vice*, and a Screen or Excuse for *Immorality*. Nothing was a greater Reproach to the Worship of *Heathen* Gods, than that it admitted of loose and immoral Practices: And can we allow of *any Thing that looks like This*, in the Worship of the Great God of Heaven, without fixing a Reproach on the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*; which we believe was given us to teach us Religion, and the Worship of God, in the most *pure* and *perfect* manner? Now this is the natural Con-

sequence of *Remission of Sins* and *Sanctifying Grace*, convey'd in the Supper of our Lord: For if by *that Rite* we are made Partakers of *such a Grace* (whatever is meant by *that Word*, for perhaps in this Case, it is not altogether *intelligible*) as *so sanctifies* us, as thereby to make us worthy of the *Pardon* of God; this entirely carries Mens Thoughts from the *Reformation* of their Lives, which they cannot on this foot think *Necessary*; and fixes them entirely on *Preparation* for the Sacrament, (which is an acknowledg'd Work but of a few days) as alone *sufficient*. At this rate a Man may *enjoy* his Sins, and yet be *Religious*; and have his *Pardon* confer'd upon him, without any one *Principle* of Virtue. Were a thousand Texts of Scripture brought to support such a Doctrine, they must be rejected by every Man of a Moral Taste, as *misunderstood* or *wrongly applied*; even tho' it should appear difficult, to fix the True Sense of them.

But there is one Argument to be drawn from Scripture, which as it depends on a plain Matter of *Fact*, is an undeniable Evidence, that no such Benefits *ever were* convey'd, or *ever can be*, to the most Worthy and best-prepared Persons; and consequently that the Word of God is *in itself pure*, and has no one Text in its own proper Meaning, that can be *justly drawn in* to countenance, on This Occasion, any thing that leads, even in the *remotest* Tendency, to immoral Practice. And therefore when any part of Scripture is so interpreted as

to infer *such Benefits*, as, I have shewn, have an *Immoral Tendency*; we may, without any Regard to the Learning or Judgment of the Greatest Men, and yet without any Arrogance or Conceitedness of our own Abilities, aver, that It *cannot* be True because it *disagrees* with this; and, that That Interpretation is *always* True, which *does agree* with it. What I mean is, The Administration of our Lord himself in the Holy Institution.

This was certainly, or none ever was, a *True Sacrament*, and brought along with it *all those Advantages and Benefits* which do truly and incontrovertibly belong to it: And the Persons partaking (except one of 'em) were no doubt *worthily* prepared, and perhaps *more so* than any Congregation of Christians from that Time to this. But the Question is, What were *Those Benefits*? Were they the Benefits of *Christ's Death*? The *Pardon* of Sins, and the *Sanctifying Grace* of God's Spirit, and an *infallible Assurance* of Eternal Life? What! Were These convey'd before *Christ* had purchased them? Before he *suffer'd*, and made *Satisfaction* for the Sins of Men? Is it possible? Or, can any Man that thinks, believe so great an Absurdity? When they are always represented as the Merits of his *Passion*, or what he obtain'd for us by the *Shedding of his Blood*. But were it possible, and we could suppose this Conveyance might be made to his Disciples, *proleptical* of his Death: Would not this have vacated the *End*, the *Design*, and the *Necessity* of his

his Sufferings? Certainly, if Pardon of Sins and Eternal Life could have been *confer'd* upon us by any other *inferior* Means, *Christ* would not have suffer'd; nor need to have done it, when he had *once confer'd* them, and appointed a *Means* for doing it also. But what need we reason so closely upon this Head? The *Fact* is sufficiently convincing, and proves the contrary. They (the Disciples) were so far from being *worthy* of Forgiveness, that at *that very time* they could not conceal *their Sins* from him. They *ambitiously* strove one among another, who should be *Greatest*, and He severely *reprimanded* them for so great a Folly. Nay, and they were so far from having received the *sanctifying* Grace of God, that He *then* foretold them, that *very Night* they would all of them act in a very shamefully Sinful manner. One would *betray* him, another *deny* his Master, and the rest all *flee* and *forsake* the best of Friends in the worst Distress.

Here then is an Instance of a real *Sacrament*, of the *First* that ever was in the Christian Church, and consequently the *Pattern* of all the rest, in which the Benefits of *Christ's* Death were certainly *not convey'd*; and therefore it must be concluded, They *never have been* in any other. The *Apostles* themselves had no Authority to add to the Words of *Christ*, nor to enlarge the Sense of them; tho' they had to inculcate the *same Truths*, in such a manner as might *best edify*. They always *preach'd the Truth as it is in Jesus*; and St. Paul

Paul says particularly of the Lord's Supper, That *what he receiv'd of Him* concerning it, *That he also deliver'd*. He did not receive from him, that the Benefits of his Death were convey'd therein; for 'tis plainly proveable, They were not: And therefore it is to be maintain'd, That he *never did*, and (as he had the *Spirit of Truth*) *never could, teach*, that they were *so convey'd*. Whoever think and argue otherwise, (let them *produce* what Texts of Scripture they please, and *interpret* them as they please) are only led into an Error for the sake of an *Hypothesis*; and have got some Notions of Faith, which have really *no Foundation*.

We *Christians* are the *Israel* of God, his *elect* and *peculiar* People, now, as the *Jews* were before; not by any Partial Love he has for us, as if he would bestow *Eternal Life* on Us and not on Others, or could make Salvation more *easily* attainable by any special Virtue or Efficacy in *External Rites*, than it *naturally* is by fulfilling with all Diligence the Law of *Internal Righteousness*: For our Moral Obligations are *Eternal* and *Unalterable*, in the very Nature and Constitution of Things; and therefore God himself can no more give us any *such a Privilege*, than he can extinguish the Light of his Own *Wisdom*, or transgress the Rules of his Own *Justice*. But he has *chosen us* out, of his mere Good-will, from the rest of the World, to bestow some *External Favors* upon us, which he might *equally* have bestowed on others as well as Us, that are *not Necessary* to
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Certain Happiness, but *only Expedient* for advancing us to an higher Degree of it, if we make the best Use of them; or if not, they will expose us to a severer Punishment: Which if duly consider'd, leaves us upon an Equality in God's *Acceptance* with every other Man upon Earth; of being judg'd *according to our Works*, under the different Light we have. Such a *Favor* is the Explicit Revelation of his General Goodwill and Compassion to all Mankind *in all the Nations upon Earth*, thro' his Son *Jesus Christ*, and of the Nature and Method of Redemption *by Him*; which Knowledge is *exceedingly well fitted* to spur us on to Moral Practice, and to a greater Perfection in it, than we should otherwise in all probability ever attain to. The Sacraments are *Outward Means* subordinate to This; *graciously* appointed by our Blessed Saviour as Acts of Faith, *to put us frequently in mind* of what He has done for us, and of what we are therefore more strongly bound to do for Ourselves.

I have not said this, to *distinguish* myself, by an Opposition to the *Opinions* of any Learned Writers upon the same Subject, but for the sake of *Truth*, or of that which appears so to Me; and, that True Religion may not be injured, nor its proper Influence on the Souls of Men *frustrated*, by *so gross* an Error as the contrary Opinion is. I know I have a Cloud of Witnesses *against me*, and many great Authorities from the *Apostolic*, down to the *present*, Age: But I think I have One on My
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side more *Ancient*; much *Greater*; and more *Infallible* than They all; which is The Word of God *written* in the Hearts of Men, and in the Lines of Holy Scripture. And I have been pleas'd to find, in This my little *Disquisition*, That there is *no part* of Reveal'd Religion that *contradicts* the Moral Dictates of Nature; but is graciously designed by the Good and Great God to be a *Means* and an *Help* to us to perform our Duties better, and not to excuse us in any Sense from those Obligations which are *interwoven* in our Make, and are of themselves as Fixt and Immutable as *He* that laid them on us.

Without this, without the Practice of *pure Morality*, I am satisfied from the whole Gospel Doctrine, that the *Blood of Christ* itself cannot save us from *Eternal Punishment*; and 'tis therefore in vain to depend on *External Rites* and *Sacraments* for This, which are entirely *fruitless* and *without virtue*, any farther than they are *powerful Excitements* to us, for working out our Salvation thro' the Blessed *Jesus*, by a constant Endeavour of being *truly Good*. 'Tis certainly the greatest and most dangerous *Fallacy* that a Man can put on his Conscience, to persuade himself, there is any Means of being saved *without Good Works*; and therefore I have endeavour'd to open the Eyes of the blind, and to shew them their *Mistake*: Which I take to be a Work of Charity, and at least an Attempt in no wise discommendable.

Whether I have done *Right* to the Argument, I cannot say. I have wrote down my own Thoughts upon it: But if they are not *clear*, or not *full*, enough; that is my Infir- mity, not my Fault. In My Way, and the Compass I allowed myself, I have searched after *Truth*, and studied *Perspicuity*: If I have reached my Design, and can do *any Good*, I shall greatly rejoice; if not, I shall be extremely sorry: Not for having attempted it, but for having fail'd in so good a Purpose.

F I N ' I S.



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